

Stockholm  
by Ashley Andrews

Devin leaned against a building and watched as students and staff rushed across campus. He turned and let his eyes trace Alexis from her sleek black hair to the three-inch wedges on her pedicured feet. She winked.

Reggie rolled his eyes. “That’s not why we’re here. A big fish has his eyes on our little group. Was thinking maybe, you could tag along tonight for the meeting.”

“Sounds good,” said Devin. He looked at Reggie, who sported a new black eye.

“Yeah?”

Devin shrugged. “I like what you’re selling.”

Reggie extended a pack of cigarettes to Devin. Devin took one and leaned forward to let Alexis light it. He took a single long drag from the cigarette and tossed it to the ground by the “Thank You for Not Smoking” sign. Reggie raised an eyebrow.

“Just the two of us tonight?” Devin asked.

“Nah, we’ll have a few more. Just in case.”

“Can Devin give me a ride home, big brother?” Alexis asked, voice full of honey.

Reggie studied Alexis, then cut his eyes to Devin. “I don’t tell her who she can and can’t hang around. Don’t be late.”

“Got it.”

Devin watched as Reggie walked away, climbed into his car, and spun out of the parking lot.

Devin slumped the moment the black sports car was out of sight. “Trying to get me killed?” he asked Alexis.

“You’re welcome.”

“What?”

“You looked like you were about to throw up. I didn’t think you could stomach the conversation, my brother, or the cigarette smoke for another minute,” she said.

“Yeah, well, at least he trusts me enough to bring me along.”

“Just…” Alexis leaned against his chest, “be careful, Devin.” He breathed in the scent of her hair, a mouthwatering, citrus smell that invaded his senses and often clung to him long after she left.

He pulled away. “I have a thing. I won’t be long.”

“I’ll wait in the car.”

He handed her his keys and watched her climb into the driver's seat, blasting the air and music. He smiled, then headed into the University’s media room. The room was dark, save for a few glowing monitors. Devin turned and found Detective Sullivan leaning against a wall.

“Thought you might be tied up when you didn’t show,” Sullivan said.

“Figuratively, I hope. I don’t have long, detective,” Devin responded, chewing a fingernail.

“Tell me everything,” Sullivan said.

“Reggie invited me to the meeting tonight.”

Sullivan leaned forward. “Who’s it with?”

“No clue.”

“Anyone else going with you?”

“Just a few guys. I haven’t talked to Alexis yet, but I know she won’t be there.”

“Devin…” Sullivan warned.

Devin slammed his hand down. “She’s not a part of this, Sullivan!”

“You’re out of line, kid.”

“Sorry, sir. I just know that she’s not a part of this. I’ll keep her away from the meeting tonight.” Devin ran a hand through his hair. “Promise you’ll leave her out of this?”

“No one will even mention her name.”

“How do I know they’ll listen?” Devin started pacing. “I need to speak to my father. Not some nobody.”

“This is *my* investigation, kid. I can pull you anytime,” Sullivan warned. He slammed a folder down in front of Devin. “I told him you weren’t ready to go undercover.”

Devin swung his arm across a desk. Glass shattered as a monitor fell to the floor. He leaned into Sullivan’s face. “She stays out of this.”

His phone chimed. Devin groaned.

“Hello, Dad.”

“You should look at the file, Devin.” His father wasted no time.

“Why should I?”

“Because you’re too damn smart to go in blind tonight. Look at the file.”

The line clicked. Devin closed his eyes and ground his teeth. He was tired of always being the obedient son.

“You sleeping with her?” Sullivan asked.

“Excuse me?” Devin took a step back.

“I asked—are you sleeping with her?”

“I don’t see how that concerns you,” Devin said.

“Only thing I know to make a man lose his mind.”

Devin scoffed.

“Don’t worry. I won’t tell the chief that his son’s sleeping with some gangbanger,”  
Sullivan said.

“Don’t talk about her like that,” Devin warned.

“You idiot.” He shook his head and flipped open the folder to image after image of  
Alexis. "She's the leader."

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